

Case 004 Suspect Im Chem Sets Retirement for June

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April 18, 2012

Though the crimes against humanity suspect has rarely come to work for the past few months, Im Chem yesterday denied a local media report that she had resigned as deputy commune chief, saying she would retire after commune elections on June 3.

The 70-year-old, who served as governor of Preah Netr Preah district in the Khmer Rouge's northwest zone from 1978 to 1979, said she would end her decade-long position as deputy commune chief of Trapaing Tav in Oddar Meanchey province's Anlong Veng district.

"I am not resigning from my position. I am retiring because I am too old, so I want to take my old age to respect to Buddha," she said.

In February, investigators from the Khmer Rouge tribunal visited Im Chem to inform her of charges against her, including crimes against humanity and genocide, submitted to the court's investigating judges in 2009 for Case 004.

The woman who oversaw the regime's largest irrigation project denied the charges at the time, stating that all she did was "urge a group of women who were to plant rice".

She continued to deny the charges yesterday and rejected any suggestion that she was going to become a Buddhist laywoman to avoid the ECCC, explaining that she would still spend part of time in the field planting rice.

After adopting the name Kansil Pram, Im Chem said she had begun visiting a nearby pagoda about once a week and could not lie to herself, kill animals, steal property, love somebody else's spouse or drink wine.

"Even though a group of judges from the Khmer Rouge court will come to meet me again at my home, I will not talk with them, because I already denied their accusations," she said.

Nhek Ha, Trapaing Tav commune chief, said Im Chem still came to the office when there were meetings.

"We do not care presently whether she comes to the office or not, it is up to her because she is too old," he said.

Anlong Veng district governor Yem Phanan said though Im Chem hadn't been attending work for the past few months, she was still listed as the deputy governor.

“After the third commune election, we will put her name down as retired,” he said.